

~~TOP SECRET~~

103

25X1

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
3 June 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED HEREIN IS **NOT** AUTHORIZED

ARMY, DOS and USMC review(s) completed.

25X1

TOP SECRET

25X1

Approved For Release 2004/10/27 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000800110001-5

Approved For Release 2004/10/27 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000800110001-5

3 June 1966

HIGHLIGHTS

Buddhist leader Tri Quang, in an anti-American press conference, has threatened to boycott the planned national elections scheduled for September and has reiterated his attacks on the US for supporting the Thieu-Ky government. Tam Chau, the moderate head of the Buddhist Institute, submitted his resignation today in a move which underlines a deep split in the Buddhist leadership.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Scattered enemy contact has been reported thus far in a series of new allied operations in II and III Corps (Paras. 1-4). Other recent action involved US troops in Binh Duong Province and South Korean troops in Binh Dinh Province (Paras. 5-6).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Buddhist Institute Chairman Tam Chau has submitted his resignation, although it may not have been accepted (Paras. 1-4). No demonstrations were reported in Saigon on Buddha's birthday (Paras. 5-6). The situation in Hue is quiet (Paras. 7-9). Buddhist leader Tri Quang threatens to boycott the September elections (Para. 10). The US Consulate in Hue is considered to be a 60-percent loss (Para. 11). The sixth immolation since 29 May was committed by a Buddhist nun in Da Nang (Para. 12). "Struggle" elements may be attempting to regroup underground in Da Nang (Paras. 13-14).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments:

--

--

[redacted] Re-
cent Communist propaganda has implicitly criticized
Thich Tri Quang's efforts to enlist US support for
the "struggle" forces (Para. 3). Hanoi radio has
condemned the Buddhist Institute's agreement with
the government as a farce (Para. 4). Chinese irri-
tation with the independent position taken by Hanoi
is reflected in the comments of the vice governor
of Kwangtung Province [redacted]

25X1

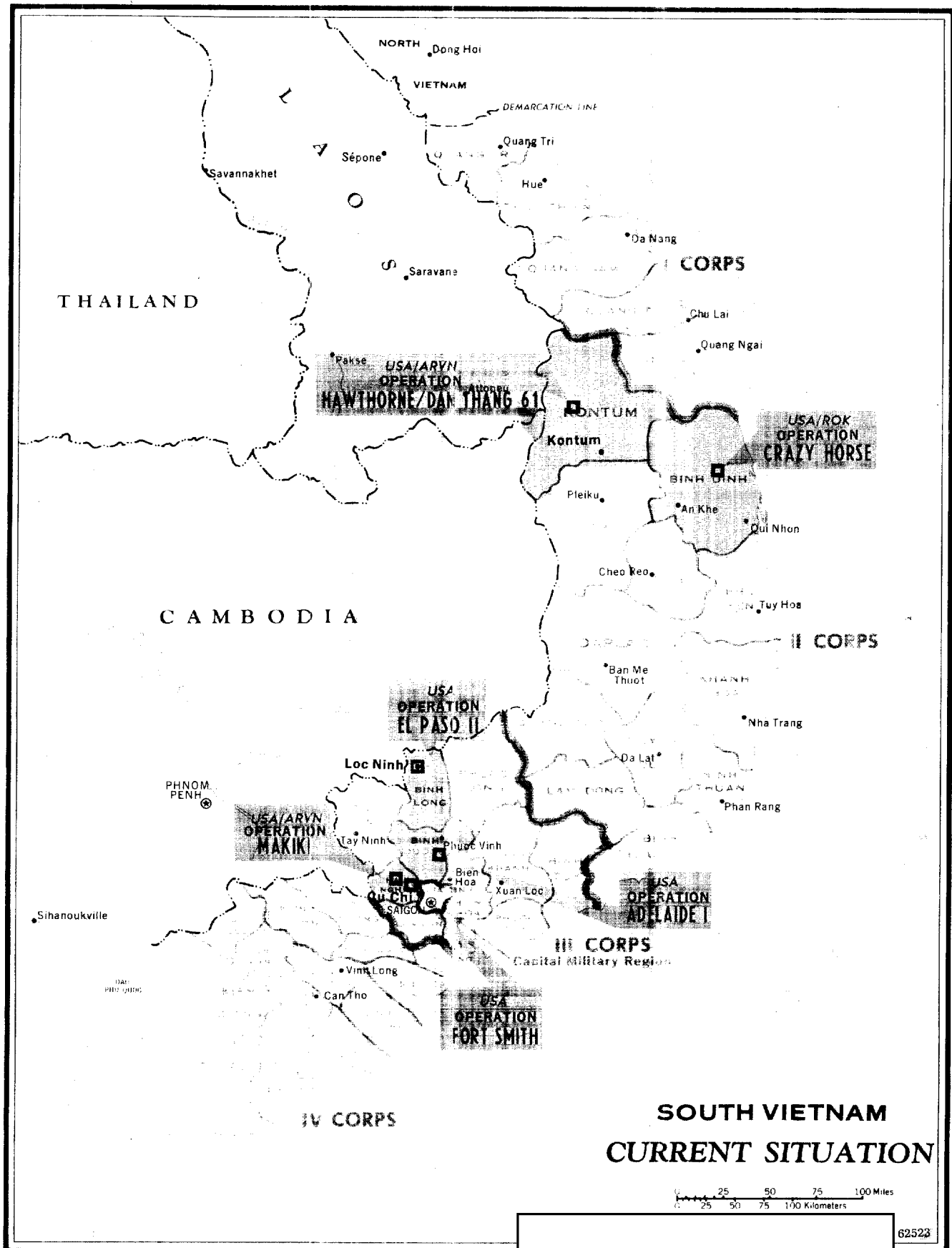
25X1

25X1

3 June 1966

ii

25X1



25X1

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Allied forces are maintaining the initiative with a new series of operations in II and III Corps. Enemy contact, however, remains generally light.

New Operations

2. In Kontum Province, two US and three South Vietnamese battalions today began search-and-destroy Operation HAWTHORNE/DAN THANG 61 north of the provincial capital. US military officials recently confirmed the presence of the North Vietnamese 24th Regiment in the general area. No ground contact has been reported thus far, although one US Air Force F-4C Phantom jet has been shot down by ground fire, with one crew member reported killed.

3. Yesterday in Binh Long Province, a battalion of the US 1st Infantry Division with artillery support initiated EL PASO II, a reaction operation designed to thwart a possible enemy attack on the Loc Ninh Special Forces camp. Elements of the 271st, 272nd, and 273rd Viet Cong regiments reported in the Loc Ninh area have not been engaged thus far.

4. Elsewhere in III Corps, the US 25th Infantry Division yesterday began two operations--MAKIKI and FORT SMITH--northwest of Cu Chi in Hau Nghia Province. MAKIKI is scheduled to last for a week, and is being conducted by four US battalions in conjunction with South Vietnamese infantry elements. This morning US forces engaged an estimated platoon of Viet Cong, killing 10 and capturing 20 others. There were no US casualties, and light contact is reported continuing. FORT SMITH, a unilateral US effort conducted by one battalion, is scheduled to last for about three weeks, with no contact reported thus far.

5. The only recent clash involving US troops and Viet Cong forces occurred yesterday, when elements of the 1st Infantry Division conducting Operation ADELAIDE I in Binh Duong Province encountered a fortified enemy position manned by eight Viet Cong soldiers with automatic weapons. During the ensuing firefight,

3 June 1966

I-1

25X1

US forces sustained casualties of seven killed and 29 wounded. Enemy losses were one killed; one mortar was captured.

6. Elsewhere, South Korean troops participating in Operation CRAZY HORSE have reported killing 32 Viet Cong in two clashes last night and today in northern Binh Dinh Province. Initiated on 16 May, this operation has resulted in cumulative enemy losses of 390 killed and 31 captured, as opposed to allied casualties of 67 killed (64 US) and 206 wounded (194 US).

3 June 1966

I-2

25X1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Buddhist leader Tri Quang, in an anti-American press conference, has threatened to boycott the planned national elections scheduled for September and has reiterated his attacks on the US for supporting the Thieu-Ky government. Tam Chau, the moderate head of the Buddhist Institute, submitted his resignation today in a move which underlines a deep split in the Buddhist leadership.

Resignation of Buddhist Institute Chairman Chau

2. Thich Tam Chau has submitted his resignation as chairman of the Buddhist Institute, but it is not yet clear that his resignation has been formally accepted. There are indications that moderate Buddhists are attempting to persuade Chau to reconsider. One-time deputy premier and National Bank governor Nguyen Xuan (Jack Owen) Oanh has told US officials that Chau's resignation was in part a ploy to try to improve his position with the Buddhist militants. Oanh expressed some doubt, however, that this ploy, used successfully in the past by Chau, would work this time, although he noted that Vietnam's ranking monk, Thich Tinh Khiet, had sent a cable refusing to accept Chau's resignation.

3. Oanh stated that Chau, since his return from Ceylon several days ago, has been under heavy pressure from the Buddhist extremists either to go along with an all-out effort to bring down the Ky government or face expulsion from the Institute chairmanship. Press reports indicate that Chau's resignation was submitted after a stormy session by Institute leaders at which five younger monks threatened immediate self-immolation if the compromise agreement with Ky and Thieu were approved by the Buddhist church.

25X1

3 June 1966

II-1

25X1

4. According to the Saigon press, Chau's close follower Thich Ho Giac, deputy chief of the Buddhist chaplain corps, has also resigned. Saigon press communiqués state that the Institute is temporarily under the control of deputy chairmen Thich Phap Tri and Thien Hoa, both southerners, and that Thich Quang Lien who is generally identified as a moderate has replaced Thich Thien Minh as the head of Buddhist antigovernment activity in Saigon.

25X1

25X1

Saigon

5. There were no demonstrations during the day (Vietnam time) as the city celebrated the anniversary of Buddha's birth quietly. There was apparently no celebration at the Buddhist Institute, despite the communiqué issued on 2 June by Tam Chau which had generally appealed for a normal religious commemoration by monks and nuns. This is an indication that the militants among the Institute Buddhists are not accepting the communiqué or the "understanding" reached with the government and will continue to press for an immediate resignation by Chief of State Thieu and Premier Ky.

6. [redacted] a new anti-government Buddhist faction has appeared in Saigon with headquarters at the Tu Duc pagoda. The group is comprised primarily of young monks with Tri Tinh as leader and Phap Sieu as his deputy. Tinh is reported to be a neutralist and Sieu is thought to be "influenced" by the Viet Cong. The young monks, ranging in age from 16 to 21, have stated their intention to perform mass self-immolations in protest against the government. This group is associated with the Buddhist Institute and appears to be behind some of the agitation against reconciliation with the government.

25X1

Hue

7. The situation in Hue, and elsewhere in I Corps on Buddha's birthday, was quiet. At 8:00 a.m.

3 June 1966

II-2

25X1

(Vietnam time), a peaceful demonstration by about 4,000 persons was held by the "struggle" movement at the Dieu De pagoda, reportedly Tri Quang's new headquarters. Protests were made against the attempted assassination of Thich Thien Minh in Saigon on 1 June. Doctor Tran Duy Tam, a leader of the Da Nang "struggle" movement and an adviser to the ex-mayor of Da Nang, was observed to be an active participant at the demonstration.

8. Barricades set up on the streets last week by the "struggle" forces were removed during the day (Vietnam time). Leaflets and public address systems called upon the "struggle" forces to turn in their arms. US military authorities report that 255 weapons were turned in during the day. [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED] 167 members of the "struggle" forces left their stronghold in the citadel and surrendered. There are reported to be 500 others remaining in the citadel.

9. I Corps commander General Lam told the US Marine commander in Da Nang today that the Hue problem is "solved," although he admitted there are still difficulties ahead. He also confirmed that, as an outcome of the recent meeting between Premier Ky and General Thi, Thi now was helping to solve the Hue situation. Earlier, Thi had been quoted as stating he was personally representing Ky in the effort to restore Saigon's authority over the city. The new government delegate for I Corps is reported to be the Quang Nam Province chief, Dr. Chi.

10. Buddhist leader Tri Quang stated tonight (Vietnam time), in an anti-American press conference in Hue, that Buddhist followers would be urged to boycott the constitutional assembly elections in September, and that the Buddhists could not agree to any elections organized under the present government. Quang also reiterated his attacks on the US for supporting the Thieu-Ky government.

11. US officials visited the still-smoking ruins of the consulate and other buildings in the consulate compound today (Vietnam time). The consulate was

3 June 1966

II-3

25X1

totally sacked but only partially burned and is estimated to be a 60-percent loss. Other US buildings were completely destroyed.

Da Nang

12. Early this morning (Vietnam time), a 26-year-old Buddhist nun, Thich Nu Dieu Dinh, immolated herself in the courtyard of the Hai Lac pagoda as a crowd of approximately 250 watched. Her death was the sixth such suicide in protest against the Ky government since 29 May.

13. "Struggle" elements in Da Nang, clinging to the hope that their movement may yet be viable in Hue and Saigon, are reported to be organizing underground. Their hopes for a comeback are predicated on the departure of the government's military forces from the Da Nang area and the rebuilding of a strong, progovernment police force in the city.

14. Since the collapse of the military aspects of the "struggle" movement on 23 May, the city itself has made a surprisingly rapid return to normal. US officials report there have been no serious shortages of food, water, or power, and telephone service has been completely restored. Prices have dropped quickly to their former levels and food stocks appear to be in good supply.

3 June 1966

II-4

25X1

III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

3 June 1966

III-1

25X1

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

3 June 1966

IV-1

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2004/10/27 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000800110001-5

Approved For Release 2004/10/27 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000800110001-5

25X1

[REDACTED]

3. Although the Communists have not been openly critical of Tri Quang, their recent propaganda has implicitly criticized his efforts to enlist US support for the "struggle" forces. On 2 June, for example, Liberation Radio warned that the Americans could not be counted on for support against Thieu and Ky and on the same day both Hanoi and Liberation Radio claimed that US and government troops entered Hue to "repress" the "struggle" forces.

4. In another example of Communist efforts to drive a wedge between the "struggle" forces and the government, Hanoi radio on 2 June condemned the Buddhist Institute's agreement with the government as a "farce" staged by the Thieu-Ky clique and "US agent Tam Chau." It also declared that the recent grenade attack on Tri Quang's lieutenant Thien Minh was a US-Saigon plot to eliminate a voice opposed to the "trick" of a negotiated reconciliation.

5. Comments by the vice governor of Kwang-tung Province [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED] reflect Chinese irritation with the independent position taken by Hanoi and probably echo the line Peking has been giving to its own senior officials.

6. The vice governor reportedly stated that Peking would support Hanoi as long as Ho Chi Minh follows Mao Tse-tung's instructions and fights to the end. He said Mao's plan is to make the war last from three to five years. As an extreme measure, the North Vietnamese Government could even move to Chinese territory and wage guerrilla warfare in North Vietnam.

3 June 1966

V-2

25X1

7. He added, however, that in his own view the friendship between China and North Vietnam was a short-term affair and cited Ho Chi Minh's refusal to reduce his ties with the Soviet Union and to follow China's lead in international relations as the major problem in relations between Peking and Hanoi.

8. He said Mao had been unable to stop Ho from dealing with the Soviets but continued to work in "small ways" to split Hanoi and Moscow. As an example, the vice governor cited Peking's early refusal to permit Soviet aid goods to transit China. He said that Mao had finally agreed, reluctantly, after Ho had argued that the socialist countries should not be divided.

3 June 1966

V-3

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2004/10/27 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000800110001-5

Approved For Release 2004/10/27 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000800110001-5

TOP SECRET